



C o m m u n i t y E x p e r i e n c e D i s t i l l e d

Building Business Websites with Squarespace 7

Master the tools and techniques of using Squarespace to create professional websites

Miko Coffey

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PUBLISHING

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BIRMINGHAM - MUMBAI

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About the Author

Miko Coffey has been building websites since 1995. Having first been introduced to the Internet through cyber-art projects such as SITO's HyGrid (www.sito.org/synergy/hygrid), she soon developed a zeal for creating things on that new-fangled thing called the World Wide Web.

After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin, Miko moved to London, where she continued designing and building websites as part of her career in marketing. During these early years, she spent a lot of time trying to convince her employers that this whole "web" thing was really going to take off and that they should definitely let her create websites for them. Over time, she started to specialize in online marketing, moving beyond design and into more tactical and strategic work in areas such as email marketing, search engine optimization, content strategy, and user experience. As she worked her way up to senior management positions by day, by night, she continued to keep a hand in web design, building websites and blogs for personal projects or for friends and family.

By 2007, having spent 2 years as the head of Digital Media for NESTA, the UK's largest innovation organization, Miko decided it was time to use her skills and experience to work for a broader client base by doing freelance work. She also wanted to get back to her design roots. Through her previous experience of managing web teams, she'd been exposed to quite a few content management systems over the years, most of which were too complex and expensive for her smaller business clients. Having been frustrated by the cost and learning curve associated with these larger systems and the lack of finesse offered by smaller ones, she started looking for something that would be easy enough for her least-technical clients to use, flexible enough for her to apply her custom designs, and powerful but affordable. It was at this point that she discovered Squarespace, and she hasn't looked back since.

Miko has spent the last 7 years using Squarespace to create websites for her clients at Using My Head (www.usingmyhead.com), where her focus is on "helping people do things better online." She strives to keep her digital marketing skills as sharp as her design skills, because the combination of the two is what allows her to add the most value to client projects. She has worked with a range of sizes and types of organizations, from The Royal Society for the Arts to Channel 4 to small start-ups and nonprofits. Her passion is to enable people to communicate better online by demystifying the often confusing online landscape and giving people the skills and tools they need to make their work easier, their bumps smoother, and their lives better.

Half Japanese and half American, Miko currently lives in Brixton, South London, with her super-creative husband / DJ / VJ / generally awesome man, Mark, and their two cats, Kuma and Toshi.

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to my mother, Nobuko, and my grandmother, Fukiko. I can only aspire to be half as positive, inspiring, and joyful as you both are. To my mother especially: thank you for encouraging me to be the best that I can be and for showing me how to laugh at myself.

I'd also like to thank my husband, resident comedian, cat singer, and rock-solid support system, Mark, for sticking by me through all of life's storms and sunshine. You mean more to me than I can say in these little words on paper.

Last but not least, a big shout out to my "Underwire" gals, Jane and Kirsty, for lifting me up in all the right places.

About the Reviewers

Chris Cox is a UX engineer who is currently working at Google in New York City, where he prototypes and writes code using a variety of languages. Originally from California, he spent over 8 years developing software for the construction industry. In 2007, he decided to venture out on his own by starting a consulting company providing web and mobile development services.

Shortly afterwards, he became one of the early employees of Squarespace, which brought him to New York. While there, he developed Squarespace's original blogging mobile apps and the Note app for iOS, and then subsequently, he became the lead engineer of version 5 of their website-blogging platform.

Ryan Reed serves as the pastor to students and families at the Hillside Church of Marin in Corte Madera, CA. A native Californian, he attended Alderson Broaddus University in West Virginia. He received a full-tuition scholarship to attend Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ. He earned two degrees: master of divinity and master of arts in adolescent development and faith formation. He was awarded the Bryant J Kirkland Excellence in Practical Theology Award at Princeton for his contribution and dedication to the field of practical theology. Currently, he sits on the board of coalition for healthy youth in Marin County and maintains a significant online presence in these fields. You can read his writings and learn more about his passion at <http://www.ryanreed.me/>.

He is married to the love of his life, Stacy, and they celebrated the birth of their first child, Hannah Grace, in January 2014. When not serving in his professional capacities, he enjoys living life with his family, reading, and mountain biking the beautiful trails of Marin County.

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Preface

Squarespace is a powerful website builder and content management system that allows you to create polished websites that look fantastic on both desktop computers and mobile devices, without needing the help of a web designer or developer. Everything is created and managed through a standard web browser, which means that you don't need to purchase, download, or install any specialist software. You don't even need web hosting, because your Squarespace subscription includes hosting as well as access to all of the Squarespace tools and functions in one place, for one price. You can also get a custom domain name (or use an existing one) and manage your blog, online shop, media gallery, and website statistics through Squarespace, making it your one-stop shop for everything you need for your website.

Why choose Squarespace

Squarespace is not the only website builder/CMS on the market; you may have heard of or considered using similar web-based tools such as Wix, Weebly, or Jimdo. You may have also compared Squarespace to more traditionally installed CMSes, such as WordPress, Drupal, or Joomla. In terms of power, flexibility, functionality, and ease, Squarespace sits somewhere in between these sets of competing products. For example, it's not as simple as something like Weebly, nor as complex and technical as something like Drupal. I believe that Squarespace offers the perfect balance: something that's very easy to set up, pretty easy to use, highly flexible, and incredibly powerful. You can create something that looks great without having to work too hard, and you have the option of digging deeper and applying advanced customizations if you want to.

Like other web-based tools, you don't have to worry about technical stuff such as servers or performing maintenance upgrades: they seamlessly take care of that for you behind the scenes. Yet, unlike some other web-based tools, Squarespace has been around for over 10 years, has an industry-leading 99.98 percent uptime, and uses multiple servers on the award-winning Peer 1 network to ensure your site's reliability. You also get access to 24/7 support, and for all but the cheapest Squarespace subscription plans, unlimited storage and bandwidth, without "throttling" (delays). This means you won't have to worry about caps on uploading or a slow/inaccessible site if you expect high volumes of traffic. Add to this the many third-party integrations that are available – such as email accounts, social media feeds, credit card processing, email newsletters, and more – and it's easy to see why Squarespace is a solid choice for business websites.

About this book

This book is a practical guide to planning, designing, building, launching, and managing a website for your business with Squarespace 7. You will learn how to use all of the Squarespace tools to control the layout, appearance, structure, and functions of your website, starting from the inception stage, all the way to monitoring and managing your site after the launch. More than just a how-to manual to create a website, this book also includes helpful design resources for finding and choosing images, fonts, and logos as well as online marketing advice about things such as increasing your site's visibility in search engines, driving traffic to your website through social media and ensuring your site visitors can perform their objectives quickly and easily.

Whether you've had some previous experience or you've never built a website before, this book leads you through a tried and tested, step-by-step process that is designed to help you create your Squarespace website in the most efficient manner possible. By following the chapters in order, you'll be more likely to launch your website on time with the least amount of hassle.

With the release of Squarespace 7, the company has dramatically boosted the support and online help available, and the user support community is rapidly growing. However, this latest version of Squarespace is a bit more complex than previous versions, and the increased flexibility and power of Squarespace 7 has made things less intuitive in some areas. Even by following Squarespace's training videos or help guides, it's not always clear what is the best method or order to do things, and sometimes, the terminology or techniques can be confusing for "non-techies". This book will guide you through every step of the way, in the right order, clearly explaining the how, why, and the effect of every action you'll perform.

What this book covers

Chapter 1, Setting Up for Success – Your Website Toolkit, introduces the process we'll follow to build your website and gives you advice on planning and gathering the raw materials you'll need for the rest of the book.

Chapter 2, Getting Started with Squarespace, sets up your Squarespace account, configures some basic settings, and takes a tour through the Squarespace system.

Chapter 3, Working with Squarespace Templates, provides an overview of the Squarespace templates and helps you choose the best one for your needs.

Chapter 4, Creating Your Site Framework: Pages, Items, Collections, and Navigation, takes you through the different types of Squarespace pages and containers, enabling you to create an empty shell ready for filling with content.

Chapter 5, Adding, Editing, and Arranging Content in Your Web Pages, talks about Squarespace Blocks and how to use them, and you'll add basic content to the pages you created in the last chapter.

Chapter 6, Using Blocks to Add Functionality, Rich Media, and Special Features, covers the more advanced types of blocks, allowing you to add functions, features, and multimedia to your website.

Chapter 7, Selling Online or Taking Donations with Squarespace Commerce, talks about how to set up and use Squarespace Commerce to create an online shop or manage donations on your website.

Chapter 8, Tailoring Your Site's Look and Feel, shows you how to adjust the aesthetics of your website, such as fonts, colors, and logo, to match your brand and target audience.

Chapter 9, Going Live with Your Website and Driving Traffic to It, performs all the final preflight checks before launching your website and helps you learn how you can use Squarespace features to promote your website through social media.

Chapter 10, Managing Your Squarespace Website, covers how to monitor your website activity with Squarespace Metrics, managing comments, inviting contributors to help you manage your site, and using Squarespace mobile apps to monitor and publish while on the move.

Chapter 11, Moving beyond Standard Squarespace Tools, teaches you how to add code to your site to expand its functions or control its appearance in ways you can't with the standard built-in tools. You'll also learn where to find code, guides, and help from Squarespace, the community of users, or from a professional designer/developer.

Appendix A, Getting Help with Squarespace, provides the list of resources that can be accessed through the Squarespace Help Center.

Appendix B, Squarespace Templates in a Nutshell, contains charts displaying the key features of all of the Squarespace templates.

Appendix C, List of Online Resources Used in This Book, gives a chapter-wise list of online resources used in the book.

Who this book is for

This book is for anyone who wants to learn how to use the latest version of Squarespace to create a website from scratch and take it through to go-live. You don't need any prior experience with Squarespace or building websites in general. As everything is done using Squarespace's simple, browser-based interface, you don't need to know how to code HTML or CSS—although any prior experience with these may come in handy if you want to perform advanced customizations. If you have used Squarespace 5 or other website builders/CMSes, this book will help you understand the key differences and teach you how to do things the new Squarespace 7 way, which may be very different from what you are accustomed to.

This book has been written with business users in mind, so the content and steps are designed specifically for websites that will be used to promote, market, or sell products and services. It's suitable for start-ups and sole traders who need to build their own website as well as for marketing, design, IT, or communications staff within organizations that want to use Squarespace to create or move their website, so they can manage it internally without needing to rely on a web designer / editor / producer.

Although professional web designers/developers who want to learn about Squarespace could use this book, it's not pitched at that level. You do not need to have any technical skills beyond basic computing skills such as knowing how to use a web browser, social networking site, or word processor.

Conventions


In this book, you will find a number of text styles that distinguish between different kinds of information. Here are some examples of these styles and an explanation of their meaning.


Code words in text, database table names, folder names, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, dummy URLs, user input, and Twitter handles are shown as follows: "For example, if you enter Jane Doe as your name, your site's Squarespace address will be `http://jane-doe.squarespace.com`."

A block of code is set as follows:

```
<p> This sentence will appear on a new line, with an empty  
  line space above it.</p>
```

New terms and **important words** are shown in bold. Words that you see on the screen, for example, in menus or dialog boxes, appear in the text like this: "Click on **SEO** to load this section into the side panel."

[ Warnings or important notes appear in a box like this.]

[ Tips and tricks appear like this.]

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We also provide you with a PDF file that has color images of the screenshots/diagrams used in this book. The color images will help you better understand the changes in the output. You can download this file from https://www.packtpub.com/sites/default/files/downloads/ImageProcessingwithOpenCV_Graphics.pdf.

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1

Setting Up for Success – Your Website Toolkit

Making a website using the Squarespace platform is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to create a professional, polished website in a short amount of time. However, starting any website project without doing the groundwork can lead to confusion, missed deadlines, and just plain bad websites. This chapter covers everything you need to do before you even sign up for Squarespace to ensure that your website project is successful. We will cover the following topics in this chapter:

- The right way to make a website
- The different components of a website
- How to create an effective Website Toolkit, which includes the following:
 - Writing your website plan
 - Creating idea boards
 - Creating your sitemap
 - Gathering your raw materials

Understanding the process of making a website

Constructing a website is a lot like constructing a building, and many of the steps and processes are similar conceptually. To construct a building, we first need to consider what type of building it will be: a hospital, shop, house, office, or any other building. Who will use it? What functions will be performed there? This will tell us what shape, size, and structure the building needs to take. We then need to gather our raw materials before the construction can start. Once we have put together the shell and framework, we can start installing the core elements, such as plumbing and fixtures, which make the building operational. Finally, we apply the paint and furnishings and are ready for the opening day.

These are the same steps we will use in this book to construct your website. First, we will set the main objectives for your site, its purpose, your audience, and the types of functions that visitors will perform there. Next, we will gather the materials needed to create your site, such as text, images, and graphic elements. We will then select a site template, fill the template with your content, and customize the site's appearance, thus making it ready for launch.

This chapter focuses on the first two parts of the process: defining your site and gathering references and materials. These two parts make up your **Website Toolkit**, and you will refer back to the Toolkit time and time again throughout the project. You might find it tempting to skip ahead to the hands-on parts of the book. This is understandable, but be warned; every building needs a solid foundation, and every successful website needs a solid Website Toolkit. Starting here and spending time getting your foundation right will really pay off later.



A good Website Toolkit will make the rest of the project easier and quicker, keep you focused, and help smooth the road when things get bumpy (and they will get bumpy). Don't rush through this part of the process.

You might also be tempted to jump around and perform the steps in a different order. Just remember: you wouldn't paint the walls before installing the electricity in a building. Likewise, it doesn't make sense to focus on font sizes and fine-tuning colors before you have a site framework with some content in it. Now, if you have ever worked with a design agency on a website project, this may sound different to the order of their process. This book is laid out in this way because you are probably not a web designer by trade, and you don't need to impress your client with pretty visuals to win the contract.

If you are a designer, feel free to use this book in the manner that makes the most sense to your business model. However, for all the non-designers out there, following the order laid out in this book will make it far more likely that you launch your site on time, in full working order. It's easy to get bogged down in design details, so we'll leave this until the end, ensuring that all the major elements are sorted first.

Understanding website concepts

Before we dive into building your Website Toolkit, let's start by breaking down a website into components so that you can better understand how to make one. Each component is distinct, but some are closely related to one another, and it's easy to mix them up. The sum total of all the components put together makes up the process of designing and building a website, which is the final goal of this book.

Structure

Structure refers to the way in which the different elements of a web page or website are put together. In the web industry, we often use tools such as **sitemaps** and **wireframes** to define a site's structure. A sitemap is simply an outline that shows the hierarchy of web pages in terms of navigation. You can think of a sitemap like a table of contents in a book, or an organizational chart.

A wireframe is a schematic drawing of a web page, showing where the main elements of the page sit. Wireframes show only the relative size and position of content and functions; they do not include visual elements such as color or images nor do they contain real blocks of text. You can think of a wireframe like a pencil sketch.

Functions

A **function** is an action-oriented part of a website, for example, a shopping cart, inquiry form, or downloads. Functions always relate to actions that we want our website users to perform, and it's important to know from the beginning what these are and what priority each function has. Functions are enabled and restricted by the technology we use. So, in our case, the set of functions available to us is defined by what is possible using the Squarespace system.

Content

This one is pretty self-explanatory. The **content** of a website refers to the text and other media (such as PDFs or videos) that sit within each web page. Sometimes, the content will be provided by someone other than you, such as a marketing or communications staff member, or from a third party, such as a photographer, stock photo agency, or copywriter. Often, the content will need to be reformatted or reworked in order to make it suitable for use on a website.

Aesthetics

Many people would refer to **aesthetics** as *design*. However, other components such as structure (the size and placement of things) and content (photographs or length of text) also play a role in design. Therefore, it's easier to keep things distinct if we avoid this term, which can be broadly interpreted, and instead narrow our focus down to the way things look and feel. This means we are talking about colors, fonts, and graphic elements such as lines and patterns, not content or structure. The *feel* part of look and feel is quite important but harder to define. This is the tricky bit: it refers to how the website appeals to your emotions. Authoritative, refreshing, playful, vibrant, or zen are just a few examples of emotive words that can describe a site's *feel* or overall impression. These words will be critical in helping you choose colors, fonts, and other visual elements to fit with your desired impression. They will also play a role in content choices such as types of photography, tone of voice, and writing style.

Writing a website plan

Now that we understand the different components of a website, we can start to lay out the project plan or roadmap for this project. Your website plan keeps you focused, ensures that your messages are right, and sets the overall direction of your project. Your website plan is one of the most important parts of your Website Toolkit, so take your time on it, get it right, and keep it close to hand so that you can refer back to it easily.



You can download a sample website plan template from this book's support bundle page on the <http://www.packtpub.com/support> website.

The website plan is laid out for you in the following sections, along with some sample answers and helpful questions to ask yourself so that you can ensure that you are on the right track when writing yours. Some of this information may already be available in your business, such as within your branding guidelines or annual reports. Don't just leave it there; put it into your website plan. For smaller businesses or those without such documents, there's no time like the present to sharpen up the way you communicate about your business, so let's get started. Many of the items included here can be used for other communication projects too.

About your business

The first section of your website plan summarizes your business and how it should be presented online.

Business overview (the "elevator pitch")

Describe your business in 2-3 sentences. Focus on what you do, what makes you different, and what your strongest selling points are. What are the key reasons your customers choose you instead of the competition?

Here's an example: Floribunda is a boutique florist that specializes in supplying unusual varieties of flowers to the wedding and catering trade. We create truly unique and distinctive arrangements by including colors and types of flowers that aren't available through any other florist in the tri-county area. Unlike other local florists, we have direct links with the best growers and only ever select the freshest, highest quality blooms.

Slogan (a.k.a. tagline or strapline)

Now, condense it down even further: does your business have a slogan or strapline that clearly defines what you offer in terms of uniqueness, benefits, or features? If not, you may find it useful to write one, as it will come in handy for your website. Ensure that it is no more than 10 words long, and open up thesaurus.com if you need word inspiration. Think about some of your favorite brands and the kinds of short, punchy phrases they use to communicate about their business.

The following are some examples:

- **Lastminute.com** - Book cheap, last-minute travel deals
- **Qantas Airlines** - All-inclusive airfares on Australia Pacific's best airline
- **Oxfam International** - The power of people against poverty

Brand image

List your company's brand values. If you don't have some already, think about how you would like your business to be perceived and list 4-5 descriptive words or phrases that you want people to feel about your business when they encounter your website.

Some examples are fresh, confident, down to earth, powerful, simple, rational, fun, energetic, cheeky, inexpensive, relaxed, quirky, luxurious, trustworthy, edgy, youthful, and refined.


About your audience

This section describes who will be coming to your website and why.

Your customers (the site's target audience)

Describe your typical customers. Pay special attention to their demographics (income, interests, gender, and age) and comfort with technology. If your website is a business-to-business site, exactly what sort of companies are you hoping to attract, and which level and type of staff members will access your site? If you have more than one type of customer, split them into primary and secondary audiences.

It may help you to think about your customer as a single individual, including his/her life experiences, job, favorite TV shows, brands, or books. How often does s/he go online, and what websites does s/he visit? In the web industry, we call this a **user persona**, and we always think about what this person would want or do, whenever we are developing the site.

[ Be specific when defining your target audience. "Women" is not a target audience. "Upper middle-class French women over 50 with smartphones" is much better.]

Primary purpose

What is the main reason that your target customers would come to your website? What action do you want them to perform? If there is more than one desired outcome, please prioritize them.

Some examples include buying a product, joining your online community, downloading a brochure, sending an enquiry, or calling your company.

About your website

The *About your website* part of your website plan helps you focus on what you want your website to do and includes some considerations you may need to take into account for this project.

Goals

What are the main goals you have for your website? What business objectives are you hoping to meet through this project? If this website will be replacing your old site, what do you want to be different/better about this one?

Some examples include generating sales, increasing leads, improving brand awareness, and reducing emails to your customer support team.

Functions

Thinking about your customers and the primary purpose described in the previous section, list the functions that your website will need to perform, in order of priority.

Some examples are: online shop, newsletter signup, RSS feed, and calendar of events.

Content

Briefly summarize the source, volume, and type of content for your site. Where will the content (text, images, downloadable files, videos) come from? Approximately how much content do you have in terms of number of pages? Is it available now? If not, when will it be ready? If it's coming from an existing source, will it need to be adjusted in any way to make it fit for your website?



A content preparation checklist is included in this book's support bundle on the <http://www.packtpub.com/support> website.

Integration

Are there any pre-existing systems or tools that your website will need to integrate with or link to?

Some examples include credit card payment gateways, social media sites, and email newsletter systems.

Site management

Briefly summarize how the site will be managed. Who will be responsible for keeping the site updated? How often will it be updated? If you will have a blog, who will moderate the comments? If you will have an online shop, how will the fulfillment and inventory process be handled?

About this project

The last part of your website plan is about the logistics of this project.

Project team

Who will be involved in this project, and what role will each person play? Even if you are doing this on your own, it's useful for you to note the project roles, because you will need to allow time for them in your schedule.


Some role examples are: final decision maker, content provider, proofreader, tester, designer, copywriter, cost approver, and project manager.

Project timelines

When do you want your website to go live? Are there any key dates to bear in mind (for example, big meetings or holidays)? Setting a realistic timeline is important, and the amount of time your project will take depends on many variables. When setting your target date, review what you have written in your plan so far, as follows:


- **Content:** How ready is it? Always allow time to reformat and adjust it.
- **Functions:** How many and how complex are they? For example, if you need to set up an online shop, think about how many products you will need to configure.
- **Team:** Will everyone you need be available at the drop of a hat?

Remember to factor in your own availability or any other restrictions. Based on all of this, you should be able to come up with an estimated date. Now, add 30 percent extra time to this estimate, as contingency. Put this date in your calendar... in pencil.

 Always set a preferred go-live date. Even if you don't have a specific date in mind, it can be useful to set an arbitrary date as your target to give you something to aim for, and to keep the project momentum.

Project budget

What is your budget for this project? You will need to budget for your Squarespace subscription, domain name (Squarespace includes one for free if you pay your subscription annually), and you might also want to set aside some money for things such as stock photo licenses and logo design. Remember, you don't need web hosting with Squarespace, so you won't need to budget for that.

 You have just completed the first—and the most important—part of your Website Toolkit: your website plan. You may want to print out your plan and put it in a folder next to your computer. You will need to refer back to it often.

Gathering materials, ideas, and inspiration

Now that you have your website plan and you know where you are headed, the next steps are to do some research and put together the rest of your Website Toolkit. The following sections can be carried out in any order, with some parts leading naturally to others as you work.

Creating idea boards

An **idea board** is a collection of ideas or inspiration that you can use as reference when creating your site. An idea board is similar to the concept of a **mood board** in fashion or interior design, but you will use them for more than just inspiration on color and style (mood), and ideally, you should have multiple boards for your website project.